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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-05 EB-08 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /064 W
----------086577 140459Z /21/64
O 132300Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5479

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 4319

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT CORRECTIONS THROUGHOUT MESSAGE)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ES
SUBJECT: FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO ON TEJUTLA
INCIDENT

REF: SAN SALVADOR 4125, SAN SALVADOR 4158

1. AFTER HEARING IN WASHINGTON OF THE INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS THE DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN RECEIVING ON THE SO-CALLED TEJUTLA INCIDENT (ACTUALLY IN NEARBY SALITRE) AND THE DOUBT WHICH STILL EXISTS OVER THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVES AND ACTIONS, I SPENT AN HOUR FRIDAY AM (9 SEPT) WITH PRESDIENT ROMERO AND FOREIGN MINISTER MARTINEZ IN THEIR HOTEL ROOM IN WASHINGTON IN AN EFFORT TO APPRISE THEM OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION AND TO SUGGEST SOME SORT OF INVESTIGATION TO SETTLE DISCREPANCIES IN THE CASE. I TOLD THEM THAT IN SPITE OF ALL THE FAVORABLE ACTIONS THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN, THIS INCIDENT HAD THE POTENTIAL FOR DAMAGING US-SALVADORAN RELATIONS ON SUCH MATTERS AS THE IDB LOAN ON THE SAN LORENZO PROJECT. I FELT THEM OUT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF SPECIFIC MENTION OF THIS INCIDENT IN THE FORMAL REQUEST FOR THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (IACHR) TEAM, AS ONE IT MIGHT INVESTIGATE.

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2. BOTH STUCK HARD TO THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE INCIDENT, EMPHASIZING THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE HAD PETITIONED GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION TO STOP CATTLE-RUSTLING IN THE AREA, AND THE DEATHS RESULTED WHEN RUSTLERS FIRED UPON POLICE. THEY FOUND ESPECIALLY VICIOUS, THEY SAID, THAT THE PARISH PRIEST THERE HAD REFUSED LAST RITES FOR THE DYING POLICEMAN. I TOLD ROMERO I HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT HIS VERSION, NOR COULD I

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CONFIRM IT. HE INVITED ME TO GO MYSELF TO TALK TO PEOPLE THERE AND ALSO TO SEE AND HEAR WHAT WAS GOING ON IN AGUILARES (A PICTURE OF FATHER GRANDE IN THE CHURCH IN THE GARB OF A SAINT FOR THE PEOPLE TO WORSHIP, AND INCITEMENT TO POPULAR UPRISING FROM THE PULPIT). I DECLINED, BUT SAID SOMEONE FROM THE EMBASSY MIGHT, REITERATING, HOWEVER, THE GREATER VALUE OF AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION, AND SUGGESTING POSSIBLE ISOLATION OR DETENTION IN QUARTERS OF SURVIVING POLICE INVOLVED UNTIL SITUATION WAS CLARIFIED. I STRESSED THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD GO FAR TO DISPEL DOUBTS.

3. ROMERO EMPHASIZED THAT THE IACHR WHEN IT CAME TO EL SALVADOR WOULD BE FREE TO TALK TO ANYONE, AND GO ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME, TO INVESTIGATE AS THOROUGHLY AS IT WISHED ANY SUBJECT OR INCIDENT THAT CAME TO ITS ATTENTION, HE SAID QTE IN SAME MANNER THAT MRS. PATT DERIAN TALKED TO CHURCH AND OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERS AS WELL AS GOVERNMENT UNQTE. HE SAID HE COULD DO NO MORE, BUT WOULD MAKE HIS POSITION ON FREEDOM OF IACHR TEAM PUBLIC. (HE IN EFFECT DID THIS IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OF 12 SEPTEMBER WITH WORDS, "LET THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS COME BRACKETS QTE VENGA END BRACKETS AND TALK WITH ALL SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY, LABOR, POLTICIANS, OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE CITIZENS...").

4. COMMENT: IT BECAME OBVIOUS TO ME IN THE LONG DISCUSSION THAT THERE WAS NO WAY FOR ROMERO TO PUT THE INTEGRITY OF HIS
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SECURITY FORCES IN DOUBT BY SPECIFIC MENTION OF ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TEJUTLA INCIDENT. HIS OWN SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON THEIR SUPPORT. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THERE WAS OPPOSITION IN HIS OWN RANKS, ADMITTING EVEN TO THEIR POSSIBLY FAKING EVENTS TO PROVE NEED FOR STRONGER MEASURES AGAINST CRIMINALITY, TERRORISM AND SUBVERSION. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER PROBABLE OPPOSITION TO HIS INVITING THE IACHR AND OVER HOW ITS INVESTIGATION WILL BE HANDLED, ESPECIALLY SECURITY-WISE. IF HE FINDS OUT THERE IS ANY GAME-PLAYING CONTRARY TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS, I AM CERTAIN HE WILL TAKE CARE OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED THROUGH SUBTLE MEANS AVAILABLE TO HIM SUCH AS ANNUAL RETIREMENT LIST OR SHUFFLING OF PERSONNEL. MY PRINCIPAL CONCERN OVER ROMERO ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IS HIS OWN OBSESSION (AND THAT OF HIS WIFE, WHO REPORTEDLY STRONGLY INFLUENCES HIM, AND THAT OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER) OVER THE SUPPOSED SUBVERSIVE POSTURE OF THE CHURCH. HE BELIEVES THAT CHURCH LEADERS ARE FABRICATING STORIES IN THEIR WAR AGAINST HIM AND THE MILITARY. HE WORRIES ME WHEN HE SPEAKS OF ARMS (MORAL, HE CLARIFIED AND EMPHASIZED) WHICH HE HAD NOT YET USED, BUT WILL BE TEMPTED TO USE IF THE ARCHBISHOP CONTINUES TO REFUSE TO DIALOGUE WITH HIM AND IF THE CAMPAIGN OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS VILIFICATION OF HIS GOVERNMENT CONTINUES. I REMINDED HIM THAT

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AT BEST HE HAD APUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM AND WAS AT A DIS-
ADVANTAGE SINCETHE TENDENCY IS TO BELIEVE THAT CHURCH PEOPLE
DO NOT LIE BUT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DO.

5. IN CLOSING, PRESIDENT ROMERO EXPRESSED APPARENTLY SINCERE
APPRECIATION FOR MY FRANK DISCUSSION WITH HIM, THE TYPE OF
DIALOGUE, HE SAID, HE WANTED TO HAVE AND CONTINUE WITH AMERICAN
OFFICIALS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: PRESIDENT, MURDER, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
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From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770969/aaaacghz.tel
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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